CerebralPaul is Xbox Ambassador of the Month for August 2020!

Community Mister Taxel Aug 4, 2020

Let’s hear it for the newest Xbox Ambassador of the Month – CerebralPaul#921! CerebralPaul#921 has been a member of the Xbox Ambassadors community since Season 13 and has set an excellent example for his fellow Ambassadors ever since. His positivity is infectious, he’s a consistently friendly face in all the XA social spaces he frequents, and he uses his livestreaming platforms to educate others on the subject of “Gaming Differently” and the many ways in which gaming is for everyone – including players with disabilities. Read on below for a Q&A with CerebralPaul#921.

How did gaming become one of your passions?

Being a disabled child in the 70’s my extra-curricular activities were extremely limited, I watched a LOT of TV. Around 1977 we got an Atari 2600 and I showed my father how to connect it (I was born to geek I tell ya), I was hooked, from there it was computer games and stand up arcade games. My involvement in online communities, gaming and otherwise, dates back to 1985. Yes there was life before the Internet. As consoles developed and improved I kept up. Then Xbox introduced Live, it opened up a whole new world for me and others like me.

Why did you become an Xbox Ambassador, and what keeps you so involved in the program?

I got an email message inviting me to join in the Spring of 2019. I had never heard of the program before that so I started scouting the forums and seeing that I could be of help given my tech and teaching background. I’m big on giving help and information on a level anyone can understand. Often not only explaining how to resolve the issue, but how to avoid it in the future.

How do you think online communities positively impact the lives of gamers?

Absolutely! Communities can bring together people from all over the world and different walks of life, in the case of the Ambassadors program it’s console gaming that initially links us. We often find lifelong friends through relationships that started online through this program or communities like it.

What makes a healthy gaming community, and what do you do to help keep your gaming communities healthy?

Patience and openness to new people with different views and values is key, especially right now with all that's going on. People are stressed beyond what they are used to. I try to make things fun when I'm interacting with the community, be it the forums, a stream I'm watching, or my own stream (even when nobody is watching). If I sense someone is getting agitated in a party I try my best to step in and defuse the situation.

What is your most positive gaming experience?

In Spring of 2019 I signed up to be an Xbox Ambassador, I signed up because I like to help people and have a vast amount of gaming and technical knowledge with which I can draw upon. As I got involved with the program I learned it was much more than that. They were stressing that "Gaming is for everyone". At the same time Microsoft, Xbox in particular, started to stress accessibility in gaming. They introduced the Adaptive Controller, an extremely customizable input device that opened up gaming for people who otherwise couldn't play. They have also added accessibility features to the console including the ability to share a controller. What makes the program extra special is the people.

The more I got involved in the forums, which were my initial focus for where I thought my skills were best suited, and the Discord channel, I started to get to know more and more people that were part of the program at all levels. Then I started watching the official Ambassador streams as well as some other Ambassadors' personal channels.

The reason I bring that up is that through the program and those people I have opened myself up to playing online with others again, I have even started to stream on a regular basis and will let complete strangers join me. I could have never done that without my involvement with the Ambassadors.

Can you tell us a bit about your life and interests outside of gaming?

Outside of gaming I am a PC/IT support technician with 40 years of experience. I also believe in public service, something that was instilled in me from a young age. At the ages from 9-11 I served as the Northern California March of Dime Poster Child. As an adult I've served on the board of directors for a therapeutic horseback program and a youth football program. I also volunteered at a community center for 14 years.

Can you tell us more about your livestreams, why you call them “Gaming Differently”, and why it’s important for people to have a better understanding of what it means to be a gamer with a disability?

Originally the stream was called “The Short Bus” because I have a sense of humor about my disability and limitations. Over time it was pointed out that I might inadvertently be offending people that don’t know me. At that time The Short Bus was parked and Gimpy P [my previous gamertag] was retired. After much thought and trying to figure out how I could still communicate the fact that I was not like most of the gaming community. When I play a game I am forced by limitation to adjust my play style, to “Game Differently”. Cerebral Paul is a play on both my name and my condition. My name is Paul, and I have Cerebral Palsy. When my mother saw it she asked if I was trying to show peoples how smart I am…yes, that too.
When I stream, if I have trouble shooting straight, game mechanics that

require fine motor skills, or control schemes that need adjusting, I point it out. Even when I get frustrated I tend to work through issues by adjusting how I approach the issue in the game.

If there’s anything else you’d like to share, please do!

Someone once said “Lead, follow, or get out of the way.” I don’t know about you, but I choose to lead.

What message would you like the community to hear from you?

To those with disabilities: Don’t worry about what other gamers think of your gameplay, they can’t see you, they don’t know you, and in response to any nasty notes you get, if you choose to reply, be polite and if you want to describe your limitations, do so. Make it an opportunity to open a dialogue. Heck, you might even make a friend. Surround yourself with people that support you and don’t judge you based on what you can’t do in a game.

To those without disabilities, don’t be toxic, don’t by default send nasty notes to people you feel costs you the match or whatever. You have no idea who the person behind the gamertag is, if they have difficulties, or are new to the game, etc… If you see they are having issues, reach out, offer to help. Leaving a bad taste about gaming could drive them off, That should never be ok.

Most importantly, have fun and make it fun for others!

That’s that for this month’s Ambassador of the Month blog entry!

Now that you know more about CerebralPaul#921, be sure to say hello and congratulations! You can find him at the below links:

Twitter

Twitch

Do you know someone who would make a great Ambassador of the Month? Nominate them at this form!